

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 151500Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9023

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2318

E.O. 11652 XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, LI

SUBJ: RAYMOND EDDE IS RELAXED

1. JUST HAD LUNCH WITH RAYMOND EDDE AT HIS INVITATION. WE WENT ROUND AND ROUND NUMBER OF SUBJECTS AS IS USUAL WITH HIM. MAIN IMPRESSION HE CONVEYED WAS OF CALM. I ASKED HIM IF CURRENT SITUATION WAS NOT LEADING TO ANOTHER MAJOR OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING BETWEEN KATAEB-CHAMOUNISTS AND JUMBLATT LEFT WING, TO WHICH HE REPLIED IN NEGATIVE. HIS VIEW, WHICH FITS IN WITH A FEW OTHERS WE ARE GETTING TODAY, IMPLIED MORE DRAWN UT MUDDLE INVOLVING GOOD DEAL OF NEGOTAITION.

2. AS USUAL HE SAID HE WAS NOT CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENCY BUT WOULD TAKE IT IF IT WERE THRUST ON HIM. SHOULD HE EVER ADMIT HE WAS A CANDIDATE HE WOULD BE THE SLAVE OF THOSE HE ADMITTED IT TO. HE CLAIMED JUMBLATT'S FAVORATE CANDIDATE WAS PIERRE HELOU AND DISBELIEVED MY SUGGESTION THAT HE HIMSELF WAS JUMBLATT'S CANDIDATE. HE SAID CHAMOUN IS TRYING TO MANEUVER SO THAT HE, CHAMOUN, WILL BE NEXT PRESIDENT, AN IDEA WHICH EDDE CHARACTERIZED

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AS RIDICULOUS. HE ADMITTED ELIAS SARKIS IS SYRIAN

CANDIDATE AND WANTS THE JOB. EDDE MADE A LOT OF NOISE ABOUT THE U.S. CANDIDATE BUT FINALLY SETTLED FOR FORMULATION THAT HE WOULD NOT DESIRE U.S. INTERFERENCE IN LEBANESE ELECTORAL PROCESS, RATHER HE HOPED U.S. WOULD BE FRIENDLY (I.E. GENEROUS) SHOULD A CANDIDATE FRIENDLY TO IT BE ELECTED. I CONTINUED TO MAKE ALL THE USUAL NON-COMMITTAL NOISES. HE ENDED THAT PART OF DISCUSSION BY ASSERTING THAT TWO THIRDS OF CHAMGER OF DEPUTIES WHICH HAD SIGNED PETITION FOR REMOVAL OF FRANGIE WOULD IN FACT FAVOR HIS CANDIDATURE. AS IN MOST DISCUSSION WITH EDDE, THIS LEFT A LOT OF LOOSE ENDS.

2. WHILE I WAS THERE, MESSENGER ARRIVED WITH NEWS THAT SIX UNITS (HE CALLED THEM BATTALIONS) OF SYRIAN ARMY HAD ENTERED LEBANON LAST NIGHT AND MOVED SOUTH. HE COULD NOT IMAGINE WHY THEY WOULD DO THAT. I TOLD HIM I COULD NOT EITHER. HOWEVER, WE HAD HEARD SIMILAR TYPES OF RUMORS THIS MORNING. WE COMPARED SOURCES, AND BOTH RUMORS SEEMED TO HAVE ORIGINATED WITH SAEB SALAAM.

3. EDDE TOLD ME OF NEW ANGLE HE HAD THOUGHT OF FOR OVERCOMING FRANGIE'S OPPOSITION TO RESIGNATION OR REMOVING LAST BIT OF CAMOUFLAGE BEHIND WHICH HE WAS HIDING IF FRANGIE WAS NOT SINCERE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE PROPOSING THAT PRESIDENT SUMIT HIS RESIGNATION TO TAKE EFFECT ONLY WHEN NEW PRESIDENT WAS INVESTED. HE NOTED THAT NORMAL PROCEDURE IS FOR PRESIDENT TO BE ELECTED PRIOR TO THE DAY OF CHANGEOVER IN OFFICE (CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR UP TO SIXTY DAY LEAD TIME). WHILE IT WOULD BE STRETCHING LEGAL INTERPRETATION SOJEWHAT, ONE MIGHT GET BY WITH SUCC APPROACH TO MEET FRANGIE'S POSSIBLE FEAR THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MARONITE PRESIDENT TO TAKE OVER PRESIDENCY IF HE RESIGNED AT PRESENT AND THAT POWERS OF PRESIDENCY WOJLD THEREFORE BE EXERCISED, AS CONSTITUTION PROVIDES, BY THE GOVERNMENT. HE READILY ADMITTED THIS WAS ASSUMING FRANGIE INTENDED RESIGN UNDER PRESSURE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

4. EDDE POOR-MOUTHED COUP LEADER BRIGADIER AHDAB, ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZED HIM AS PATRIOTIC MOSLEM LEBANESE. HE
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GENERALLY HAD POOR OPINION OF ALL HIGH LEBANESE MILITARY. HE REITERATED HIS OWN PARTY'S PROGRAM IS LIACIZATION OF THE STATE AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF A LIBERAL, FREE-ENTERPRISE, DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONAL LEBANON.

5. THAT WAS A TYPICAL ENCOUNTER WITH RAYMOND EDDE, WHO NEVERTHELESS REMAINS ONE OF THE TOP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES.

LAMBRAKIS

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